

Message Text

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13

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6278

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

UNCLAS BOGOTA 7364

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CO

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT LOPEZ INAUGURATES CONGRESS

1. AS IS CUSTOMARY, PRESIDENT LOPEZ INAUGURATED THE 1976/77 CONGRESSIONAL SESSION ON JULY 20. HE DEVOTED MOST OF HIS SPEECH TO A DEFENSE AND EXPLANATION OF HIS PROPOSAL FOR THE

CONVENING OF A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 1978 TO REFORM THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE DEPARTMENT AND MUNICIPALITIES. CONGRESS MUST PASS LEGISLATION CONVENING THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY IN TWO SEPARATE SESSIONS. THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL ALSO INCLUDES THE SEPARATION OF CONGRESSIONAL AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND THE PROHIBITION OF THE RE-ELECTION OF PRESIDENTS BEGINNING WITH HIMSELF. THE PRESIDENT SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME IN HIS SPEECH ATTEMPTING TO EDUCATE THE CONGRESS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC ON THE NECESSITY FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY. BASICALLY, HE SAID, CONGRESS HAD TOO MANY OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE ABLE TO DEVOTE THE TIME TO THE BADLY NEEDED REFORMS.

2. IN HIS SPEECH, THE PRESIDENT MENTIONED ONLY TWO FREQUENT

POLICY ISSUES. HE PRAISED THE RECENT AGREEMENT WITH BRAZIL PROVIDING FOR THE JOINT EXPLORATION OF COAL. HE ALSO EXPRESSED OPTIMISM THAT AN AGREEMENT WITH VENEZUELA ON TERRITORIAL DELIMITATIONS IN THE GULF OF VENEZUELA WOULD BE
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REACHED BEFORE HE LEFT OFFICE TWO YEARS HENCE. HE SAID

THAT IN SPITE OF DIFFERENCES ON TTKS ISSUE RELATIONS WITH
VENEZUELA HAVE BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE VERY CLOSE.

3. THE ADDRESS CONTAINED NO SURPRISES NOR ANY NEW INITIATIVES.
LOPEZ' PROPOSALS AND ARGUMENT HAVE BEEN MATTERS OF PUBLIC DEBATE
FOR SOME TIME AND THE PRESIDENT SIMPLY USED THE OCCASION OF
THE INAUGURATION OF CONGRESS TO FORMALIZE THEM.

4. THE EMBASSY WILL POUCH COPY OF THE 268-PAGE ANNUAL
MESSAGE SHORTLY.
DREXLER

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